
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google[™] books

<http://books.google.com>





600097175Z





ADVENT ADDRESSES

OR

MEDITATIONS

ON

THE FOUR LAST THINGS.

BY

REV. F. R. H. H. NOYES, M.A.

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."

LONDON:

William Skeffington, 163 Piccadilly.

1871.



138. g. 487

Digitized by Google

P R E F A C E.

The following meditations were given to a small Country congregation and are now published in the hope that they may prove more generally useful.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
I. DEATH.	
1. The first Death - - -	5
2. The great Death - - -	10
3. My own Death - - -	13
II. JUDGMENT.	
1. The earthly Tribunal - - -	16
2. The Heavenly Tribunal - - -	19
3. How to prepare for Judgment - - -	25
III. HEAVEN.	
1. Earthly Joys - - -	29
2. The happiness of the Blessed - - -	34
3. The Inner Life - - -	40
IV. HELL.	
1. Earthly sufferings - - -	46
2. The pains of the lost - - -	51
3. What leads to Hell—What saves from Hell -	57

DEATH.

I. *The First Death.*

CONSIDER, first, the condition of man in Paradise—his happiness—his perfect contentment—the protection which he enjoyed from all the ills to which flesh is now unhappily heir—the utter absence of all care and anxiety for the future. Night after night he lay down after his communion with God in the cool of the evening with a sense of security such as no man has ever enjoyed since the day that sin and death entered into the world. Day after day he rose to his work and to his labour (the work which God had given him to do of tilling the grateful soil and of caring for God's creatures) without one thought of difficulties or dangers to be encountered. All was peace.

Contrast this sense of perfect security with the condition to which man was reduced after the fall. Expelled from the Park of God—cut off from the Tree of Life—driven into the wild waste places of the outer world to make his own living—finding new and

undreamt of difficulties at every step—the very lower creation itself refusing any longer to render a willing obedience to one who had been disobedient to their common Creator, but above all with the horrible dread of the as yet unexecuted sentence hanging over him, “*In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” He had pretended to disbelieve it once, he had said to himself in the moment of temptation that it was impossible that to eat just one apple could make such a change in the nature of his existence, just as we sometimes wilfully shut our eyes to the certain consequences of our fault in the intensity of our longing to gratify some unholy wish or passion. But no sooner was the crime committed than he felt the truth of the sentence within him. Shame and fear, sentiments hitherto foreign to his nature, and precursors of the awful change that was working in him, took possession of his soul. He knew that he was naked, he hid himself from the presence of God. True day followed day and the sentence still remained unexecuted, but it hung over his head like the fabled sword of Damocles. He had lost for ever the sense of unbroken security which he once possessed. Night after night as he lay down to rest, worn out with unwonted toil in the sweat of his brow, he knew not whether the dreaded messenger might not strike him as he lay. Day after day as he went forth to

contend with the thorns and the thistles which he had himself provoked, he knew not what unknown dangers might bring upon him the fulfilment of the threat. And he could not forget if he would. Daily he felt within himself symptoms which told him of the working of God's law within him, and of the change in the condition of his existence. Pain and weariness—sickness and disease—the slowly advancing marks of old age—all hitherto unknown to him, told him too plainly that he was not what he used to be, and warned him of the approach of the dreaded foe. The exact manner of his coming he knew not. Was the lightning flash to be the messenger of the wrath of God? or was he to be the victim of some fierce beast of prey who no longer owned his former sovereignty? or were the powers which he possessed to waste away in lengthened decay until his enfeebled nature had no longer the power to resist the approach of the enemy?

Years went by—years of toil and sorrow—years which if they were marked by a regret which failed to recall the past, were not without bright beams of hope to light up the darkness of the future, in the recollection of the promise which in that hour of “strangely considerate anger” God had given the guilty pair. Years went by, and still the Angel of Death came not. Would he ever come? Is it possible

that this question began to be asked by them? If so, terrible was the answer they received. He came and claimed as his first victim, not the authors of sin, but their best loved son, who had so often cheered their sinking hearts by his simple faith and guilelessness. And what a death! The morning had been as usual. No shadow of the awful blow which was that day to desolate their hearth was on them as they went forth each to his chosen work and labour. The daily morning sacrifice is offered. Every member of that first family circle brings his best gift to the altar, and Abel the younger son at least with such simplicity of faith that he is able to see in the firstling of his flock an image of the true Lamb of God, who in the far distant generations of the world should be offered up as the perfect Sacrifice for sin, and by virtue of that sacrifice would restore to him the home of peace and sinless happiness which had been lost by the sin of his parents. A special mark of God's favour is given him, and as he speaks of it in happy heedlessness he marks not the change which passes over his elder brother's face, a sign of those jealous feelings which are working within him. A little later, and what a scene presents itself! The two parents bending in speechless agony over the lifeless body of their boy slain by his brother's hand. They have lost in one day both their sons; one is

dead, the other is dead to them, made by his crime a fugitive and a vagabond upon the face of the earth. For the first time they gaze on death, and oh! how bitter must be their thoughts as they realize the extent of the sorrow they have brought not only upon themselves but upon their whole posterity. How in this moment of their agony do they reproach themselves for the folly which induced them to listen for one moment to the voice of the tempter—“*Ye shall not surely die.*” Hardly less murderers in their own sight than the guilty Cain, for was not his crime a direct consequence of their own fall?

Two considerations follow from this.

I. *Death is the penalty of sin.*

It is this which invests it with its peculiar horror. Good men can meet death with resignation, just as a good child will accept with meek submission the punishment which it knows it has deserved—but still it is a punishment. It is not natural to us. It is the mark of a degraded and fallen nature. We were not created for it—and yet as all are sinners by birth and by act we cannot avoid it. There are considerations which may soften the penalty, but still the fact remains that **DEATH IS THE PUNISHMENT FOR SIN.**

II. *How God must hate sin*, when He the All-merciful can inflict *such* a penalty on the sinner. Oh! that as we shudder at the thought of death we might

learn to hate more intensely the sin which brought death into the world—and by fleeing from sin might escape that second death which outweighs in its awfulness the death of the body.

II. *The Great Death.*

Let us picture to ourselves another scene. Let us place ourselves in spirit at the foot of Calvary. Let us pierce with the intensity of our gaze the miraculous gloom that shrouds the earth in darkness, and look upon the form of Him, who, for our transgressions, is hanging upon the Cross of Shame: and, as we hear that appalling cry: *Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,*” and see the ashy paleness of death spread itself over those noble features, let us ask ourselves—

1. Who was this?
2. Why did He die?
3. What were the effects of His death?

1. Who was this—dying this ignominious death, surrounded by mocking crowds? No common malefactor it is clear—for no common malefactor had the power to stir the hearts of all around him to such fierce joy or to such bitter grief, as we may see depicted in the faces of the spectators at the foot of the Cross. Who was this? The sun, which refuses to shed its

light on the awful scene : the earth, as with mighty convulsions it seems to sob over its Maker's agonies : the Centurion, hardened to such sights of suffering, yet who had never seen such a death before : these all bear their witness that This truly is the Son of God ! Yes, He whom we see enduring the penalty of sin—in all the mortal agonies of the most painful death, is in very truth the Eternal—the Sinless One—the very God who first pronounced on His guilty creatures the sentence of death. How is it that He is now in human form enduring this most awful penalty ?

2. What better answer can we have than those words of the inspired prophet of old : “ *He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.* ” That death scene is but the proof of the wonderful love of God, who, though He could not belie His word, and save the sinner from the death due to his sin, would yet, by tasting death for every man Himself, lighten that terrible burden which we have to bear, and satisfy the sterner demands of an inexorable justice.

3. What are then the effects of that death ?

Death is no longer so utterly hopeless to him who has faith in Jesus. It still remains a penalty for sin, from which the natural man, created for immortality, shrinks with instinctive fear and dread—but it is a penalty shared with Jesus—the greater burden of which He has borne—and so they who have hope in their death, are able to face it with peace and calmness. For what cause have they to fear? Has not Jesus died? Are they not, in their death, but treading in the footsteps of Him, who, in dying, removed from death its sting? From henceforth, to die is but to sleep in Jesus, to be taken home to His bosom, and there to be hushed to sleep, after all the fierce conflicts and weary trials of an earthly life have ceased for ever—to wait in the sweet calm of conscious rest for that even happier time, when, after the Resurrection of the Body, we shall be for ever with the Lord whom we love.

We may deduce from these thoughts two considerations—

1. It deepens in our souls the sense of God's love, who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up freely for us all, to save us from the penalty due to our sins—for oh! if it is a terrible thing for the natural man to die, what must it have been to Him, who, though He was very man, was also very God—the very Life Himself—and yet, even from this He did not shrink

for our sakes. Shall we not then love Him who *so* loved us ?

2. It deepens in our souls the sense of the thorough hatefulness of sin—when no less a death than this could satisfy the justice of God. O my soul ! thou art tempted at times to think lightly of thy sins, to esteem them of no more than passing moment in the eyes of thy God. Learn then, from the sight upon which thou hast been gazing, to think differently. Read in the death agonies of thy Saviour the weight of the lightest of thy sins, and shudder to think how often thou hast carelessly—nay, even wilfully—condemned Him to this death.

III. *My Own Death.*

Let me try to picture to myself the moment of my own death. I have been stricken down with some disease. It is fatal. I know it. The increasing anxiety of my friends, the more sedulous care of the doctor, the silent tears which from time to time roll down the faces of those who watch around my bed, tell me that my time has come—that there is no more hope. I can no longer look forward to the possibility of living many years or days,—but I know now that a few hours or minutes, and I am, as the world counts it, no more. Already the dew drops of death clam

my brow. Already the watchers wipe away the foam of death from my lips. Is it fear or hope that sends that strange tremor through my frame? Is it the joyful effort of the soul to escape to the loving embrace of its Saviour? or is it the fierce struggle of the unwilling soul to retain possession of its miserable and suffering home of clay, rather than go forth to meet its doom? Do I rejoice in my spirit or fear with a terrible fear at the thought of a speedy death? But now the struggle is over. My body, that which I so lately called mine, lies on the bed, still, motionless, soulless, food for corruption. My soul, my real life, goes forth into that wide pathless expanse of the world of souls to seek its doom,—borne by the gentle hands of angels to its sweet rest in the bosom of Jesus, or fiercely driven by evil angels to the restless abode of the lost.

One thought comes to us with overwhelming force, as we seek thus feebly to realize to ourselves the moment of death, and that is the thought of our own ignorance—our own helplessness. We are altogether in the hands of God. He knows, but we know not either the time when, or the means by which God will call us,—whether it will be to-day, to-morrow, next day, or fifty years hence—whether it will be a sudden unexpected death, by what the world terms an accident,—whether it will be

preceded by a few days' illness, or by a long wasting away of our powers,—whether in short we shall have any time for special preparation or not. It follows, then, that our only safety lies in being always prepared, always living in expectation of death. O my soul! art thou prepared? Thou knowest that if thou art the way of death is easy, for Jesus has died. Thou knowest that to the Christian to die, is but to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Why then dost thou shrink? Why dost thou cry out for a little more time, when thou hearest in the distance the flutter of the dread angel's wings? What is there in thy present life to make thee fear? Whatever it is, it must be taken away at once. Resolve then, O my Soul, that thou wilt from henceforth seek to live in a state of daily preparation for death,—that thou wilt never do anything which thou wouldest be afraid to be found doing at the moment of death.

JUDGMENT.

I. *The Earthly Tribunal.*

Let us try to place ourselves, in thought, before an earthly tribunal. We are accused, it may be, of some dreadful crime: and we are placed there in the dock to prove our innocence if we can. Let us suppose first of all that we are innocent. But our innocence is not known to the Judge; he is only a man like ourselves, and must judge by the evidence placed before him. It may be appearances are against us. It may be that we shall have difficulty in proving our innocence. Can we realize at all what our feelings would be if placed in such a position?

1. *Shame* at being placed there—a feeling of degradation at even being accused of such a crime. Was not this one of the severest trials of our Blessed Lord?—being dragged before the judgment seat of short-sighted man, and there being accused of the crime which in His Soul of Souls He most loathed. “*Shame hath covered My Face.*” We stand there with all eyes upon us,—some full of curiosity, some

mocking at our misery, others pitying us with the pity which is akin to suspicion. Oh, if we could only put ourselves out of sight—if we could escape from it all. But no, we are helpless, we must bear it as well as we can—we must wait till the sentence is pronounced—till we hear the doom of acquittal or condemnation.

2. Secondly, there is *Fear*. What, if in spite of our innocence, we should be found guilty. The judge and jury are but men. They may be mistaken, they may give a wrong judgment, and if so we shall have to bear not only a sentence we have not deserved, but the bad opinion of all those who have hitherto loved and respected us. Innocent men have suffered before now,—perhaps it may be our case. Oh! how full of anxiety are we to know the result! Oh! the torture of that suspense as the jury retire to consider their verdict, and minute after minute passes by and they return not!

Next, let us suppose that we who stand in that dock on our trial are *guilty*. True, we may not be condemned, the evidence may not be enough to convict us, and we may get off. What are our feelings? There is the same shame and the same fear, but intensified. There is the secret conviction of guilt to weigh us down. There is no honest pride of conscious innocence to support us. We feel that we are *found out*: that we who have so long deceived

our neighbours by the outward respectability of our conduct can deceive them so no longer. If we are acquitted we slink out of court self condemned and feel unable any longer to look honest men in the face. If we are condemned we must bear the sentence with the additional burden of knowing that it is deserved.

Let us draw from these thoughts the following lessons :—

1. If the judgment of our fellowmen is thus terrible to us, what must be that of God, who knows us so well? Our faults are not hid from Him. He knows the very secrets of our hearts, and if these will not bear the scrutiny of our fellows what must we be in His sight before whom the very Heavens are unclean! *“ If our hearts condemn us God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things.”*

2. Are we not hypocrites? The secret of our fear of the judgment of our fellows is that we are not what we seem to be. The fair outward face which we are able to put on is not an honest indication of the darkness within? Let us seek then above all things to be honest and open, never to be otherwise than we seem—never to seem otherwise than we are. There are few better tests of the reality of our spiritual life than the knowledge that we are always acting up to this rule.

II. *The Heavenly Tribunal.*

“ When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.”—S. MATTHEW xxv. 31.

“ And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them.”—REVELATION xx. 11.

Let us place ourselves in thought before that awful white Throne of Judgment which these passages refer to. The Great Day, the Day of the Lord has come. It has been long it may be as men count time since we lay down in the sleep of death and our souls went forth from their homes of clay. We have been waiting in the Resting place of the Blessed, in the Paradise of Jesus, as prisoners of hope, our prayers ever mingling with those of thousands of saints who have never ceased in their cry, “ How long, O Lord, how long, Holy and True,”—longing with a ceaseless longing for the coming of that time which shall give to them a consummation of their bliss in bringing them face to face with Him whom they have loved better than life itself, to be for ever with Him :—or as

companions of Dives we have been waiting in terror for the moment when the sentence which the soul has pronounced upon itself shall be irrevocably confirmed by the mouth of the Great Judge Himself, and the torments which it has suffered in anticipation shall become awful and eternal realities. And at last the Day for which we have so long waited in hope or in dread has come. The trumpet voice of the Archangel has sounded. The prison doors are thrown open, and willingly or unwillingly the souls burst forth to be reunited to the bodies which they have so long forsaken. It is a day of terror and of joy. Everywhere the earth is pouring forth its countless hosts of dead. In the distant Heavens the sounds of an advancing Army of Triumph are heard. Already the Banner of the Great King, the Sign of the Son of Man is seen advancing in the Heavens, and following close upon it surrounded by countless myriads of adoring angels is seen the Person of the once despised and Crucified One.

The Throne is set. On it is seated One whose Name is Terrible. Circling round the Throne and reaching far away in the distance as far as eye can see are the forms of cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, witnesses of the coming shame and the coming triumph. And now all is ready. The

Books are opened. The accuser of our brethren stands by, to bear his accursed witness against those whom by his arts he has ruined, and to claim for his own all who shall fail to pass through the fearful ordeal. What wonder if amongst that innumerable multitude of all nations, tongues, and languages we see thousands upon thousands wringing their hands with fear at the thought of the shameful exposure which awaits them! not daring to look upon the face of Him whom in time past they have so cruelly mocked—crying aloud in the madness of their despair to the rocks and the mountains to fall on them, and show them that mercy which they dare not hope for otherwise—seeking to hide themselves amongst the multitude from the piercing gaze of that Eye from which there is no escape.

On the other hand there are those whose faces are already lit up with joy in the anticipation of their approaching glory. There is nothing terrible to them in the appearance of Him who sits on the Throne, for is He not their Saviour? Do they not see in those glorious scars in His Hands and Feet and Side proofs of His love, compassion and mercy? Have they not long loved Him with a love surpassing all things? Is not this the Day they have looked for and prayed for through many weary years of waiting? they await the coming ordeal with calm confidence, knowing

in whom they have trusted, that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him—knowing that their peace is made and their salvation secure.

And many there are besides across whose faces we may see the dark shade of fear chasing the bright light of hope in rapid alternations. Their fate is yet in the balance. Poor weak souls! On Earth their repentance was so late or so imperfect, their faith so weak, their love so poor, that they feel that if they are saved it will be "*so as by fire*," and only by the exercise of that mercy which they have no right to claim even whilst they venture to hope for it.

And now the Judgment begins. One by one each is summoned to take his place before the Throne and to receive the verdict of acquittal, "Well done, good and faithful servant"—or the sentence of condemnation, "Depart, thou cursed." One by one, as the sentence is pronounced, each takes his place on the right hand or the left of the Great Judge. At last our turn comes. There is no escape, no chance of concealment. We must obey the call, must stand trembling before the Throne. The book of our life is unfolded. And what a record it is! Day after day, page after page tells its fearful tale. Our faithless memories refuse to recall *now* that awful list of sins which will then be revealed with such distinctness. Words which

have been forgotten as soon as uttered, thoughts which have left no permanent impression on the mind, deeds which have been done in darkness and in secret, the light of eternal truth will make all as clear as the day. Men and angels know us for what we really have been. Not one single sin, not one single weakness, not one single act of forgetfulness will be omitted by the great accuser. Can we dare to realise our feelings?

1. First there is unutterable *Shame*. We value the opinion of our fellowmen now. We like to be thought well of—like to be praised even when we deserve it not—we like especially to be well thought of by good and holy men. What then must it be when the darkest secrets of our lives which we have kept hidden in the furthest recesses of our hearts are proclaimed aloud before God and angels and men? When our former companions and friends shudder at the sight of our newly revealed vileness? When the pure in heart hide their faces at the sight of our uncleanness—the meek spirited tremble at our daring pride—the humble gaze with astonishment at our vainglorious self-exaltation? We dare not look up. If we venture to cast a glance around our gaze is quickly withdrawn as we see the Face of Jesus clouded with grief—angels veiling their faces as if unable to look on one who had so deeply sinned;

the blessed despairing of our salvation as they hear the fearful record—the lost already claiming us as belonging to their cursed band: devils alone rejoicing as they think of one more soul wrenched from the arms of Jesus, to be given over unto them. Oh! the unutterable shame of that awful hour!

2. Secondly, there is *Fear*, scathing, soul-devouring fear. Every accusation is true, we cannot deny it—we are speechless—for we are guilty. We realise now as we never realized before what a fearful thing it is to fall into the Hands of the living God! Formerly we found it easy to drown the thought of an eternal future in the employments or pleasures of the passing hour. *Now* sin is revealed in all its hideousness and all its folly, as we look upon the Face of Him whom we have aggrieved and insulted by our sins—as we think of His rejected love, as we dwell upon our lost opportunities, and look upon the mouth of hell yawning to receive us. Oh what fools we were to account the life of the righteous madness and his end without honour! what would we not give if we could but recall the past, if we could but once more have time within our grasp and put off that eternity which we so much dread. But no! it cannot be. It is too late. We cannot live our life over again. We must receive the sentence which is the appointed reward of our deeds. And yet, stay one moment. Is there

not one plea that we can offer that will stay that awful sentence we feel we have so well deserved? Is there not one plea? Yes, surely there is one, but can we, dare we use it? Can we look up into the Face of our Judge and say, "Thou hast died for me, Thou hast borne my punishment; Thy Precious Blood has washed out the stain of these my sins; I have Thy promise that they shall be blotted out of the book of Thy remembrance for ever?" God of His infinite mercy grant it!

But we dare not look further now, dare not anticipate the nature of the sentence we shall receive as our due. Before we go on further to consider how we may best prepare ourselves for judgment shall we not pour forth our hearts in prayer that God would teach us now so to live that when that hour of shame and fear shall come we may be able to offer that unanswerable plea—Pardon through the Precious Blood?

O my soul! wilt thou not resolve to remember from henceforth that for every word, thought and action of thy life God will bring thee to Judgment?

III. How to Prepare for Judgment.

What question can be of more importance for each of us than this? How am I to prepare for that Great

Day? Am I already prepared? If the voice of the Archangel were to sound in my ears to-night should I feel that I was ready? Let me think of the past. What right does it give me to think so? When I recall what my life has been from my childhood to this hour, with all its sins, its negligences, its forgetfulness of God, I am overwhelmed with terror. How must I prepare?

There are three things necessary.

1. For the past, *Repentance*.

2. For the present, *Faith*.

3. For the future, *Persevering Watchfulness*.

1. Thou must repent, O my soul, thou must have an abiding sorrow for the sins of thy past life by which thou hast so grieved thy God and Saviour; thou must readily confess them, notwithstanding the shame which such confession may bring, and thou must make restitution for the past as far as lies in thy power, and prove by thine after conduct the sincerity of thy profession of repentance. It is by thus condemning thyself that thou canst alone hope to escape the judgment of God. Let neither therefore the fear of man nor the love of ease and self-indulgence hinder thee from the godly exercise of true repentance—from offering up to God the acceptable sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart.

2. But without Faith our repentance however

sincere would be in vain—our conversion imperfect. Without Faith we could never hope that our sins could be forgiven, however bitterly we grieved for them ; but Faith unveiling the past lifts our eyes to the Cross of Jesus, and as we see Him suffering there enables us to say, “ O my Saviour, I know that Thou hast borne my punishment. I know that though my sins are more in number than the hairs of my head Thy Blood has the power to wash them all away.” It is Faith, which makes the things of the invisible world so clearly present to our vision, that amidst all the failings and weaknesses of the present, we are saved from despair by our sight of that same Jesus standing for us at the right Hand of God, and pleading His Great Sacrifice in our behalf. It is Faith which, recognising the saving efficacy of that plea, draws us now with the irresistible force of love to the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood, in which we plead on earth that same all-sufficient Sacrifice which our Saviour pleads in Heaven.

O my soul! wilt thou not cry aloud from the depths of thy troubled heart: “ Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief?”

3. *Persevering Watchfulness.* The history of the past gives us warning enough that we have need to be watchful. How often have all our good resolutions faded absolutely from our minds in the moment of

temptation, and we have once more fallen into those sins which we thought could never again overcome us ! And we must persevere. The crown is reserved only for those who continue to the end. Let us not then, when this holy season has passed away, be forgetful of all its good resolutions and all its solemn warnings. Let us use every effort that we may not fall back again into that old dreadful state of carelessness and indifference, lest at any time that which was said of the man in the parable become true of us, "*The last state of that man was worse than the first.*"

O my soul, wilt thou not resolve whilst this thy state of trial lasts, to use most diligently the means of grace which God has provided for thee in His Church, remembering thine own weakness, and the need thou hast ever to be pleading before the Throne of mercy the Great and Prevailing Sacrifice of the Cross ?

HEAVEN.

I. *Earthly Joys.*

If we allow ourselves to reflect for a few moments on the transitory nature of those pleasures which the world has to offer us, it will help us to look forward with more intense longing to the joys which are prepared in Heaven for those that love God.

There are two threads which so to speak run through our earthly life, often broken, often entangled, but still evident in all: the thread of sorrow and the thread of joy. As there is no person that is exempted from the universal lot of sorrow and suffering, so there is no person however miserable be his ordinary state who has not his gleams of sunshine, some moments at least when his troubles and trials are forgotten. Nay in the lives of some these two threads seem so strangely intertwined that their very suffering is to them an unfailing spring of happiness.

It will perhaps assist our meditations on this branch of our subject if we take it in the following subdivision:—

1. Pleasures of sin.
2. Lawful pleasures.
3. The Happiness of serving God.

1. It is impossible to doubt, as well from our own experience as from the number of slaves which the devil has, that there is some attractiveness in sin. If it were not so, if the devil had no such bribes to offer, no such blinds to use, it would be impossible to conceive that men knowing the consequences of sin, in the present and in the future, could listen for one moment to his suggestions. But it is because they anticipate pleasure in the immediate gratification of their wishes that they consent to run the fearful risk of future punishment. And in what do the pleasures of sin consist? A. In the act of rebellion. It is a strange characteristic of our fallen nature that there is a strong tendency in us to disobey for the sake of disobedience. All law is felt to be a restraint upon the natural desires of our evil nature, and hence there is more or less of guilty joy in every act of disobedience, as it seems to give us more of that liberty which we crave after. It is this spirit of lawlessness in the world of which we see so much in the prevalent desire to upset all constituted authority, and to subvert all established forms of order. It is this which accounts for that spirit of liberalism which professes most delusively to have for its end greater individual freedom. It is this which accounts for the prevalence of that 'free thought' by which men seek to emancipate themselves from the laws of religious

faith laid down by God in His Church, and profess that in this act of rebellion they are but exercising a right inherent in their nature. Or to take a more common illustration, it is this which gives its force to the well known proverb, 'Stolen waters are sweet.'

B. There is the pleasure which springs from self-indulgence. Every temptation has its power over us through our self love; and it is through this individual love of self that we allow the momentary pleasure of gratifying our passions or senses to outweigh the graver considerations of our duty towards God, and of our future and more lasting interests. And now consider for a moment how unsatisfying are the 'pleasures' of sin. How short-lived are they! No sooner is the act of sin over, and the end gained for which we have perilled our soul, than feelings of remorse step in. We feel at once how foolish we have been, how little "the game was worth the candle," to use an expressive French proverb; how much wiser it would have been if we had exercised a little self-restraint and denied ourselves the momentary pleasure which we anticipated from our self-indulgence. And then again there is to be considered the misery which sin always bring in its train, and which outweighs in such a degree its pleasures. Take as an illustration the case of the drunkard. I suppose it must be conceded that he finds some pleasure in his

degrading self-indulgence; and yet none can deny the utter misery of the drunkard's condition. His body is enfeebled by his self-indulgence, and made liable to the inroads of every kind of disease. He is a subject of mockery to his companions, of pity to his friends, shunned by all his respectable neighbours, and a curse to himself. Can any man look on the picture of a drunkard and believe in the reality of sin's 'pleasures?'

2. Lawful pleasures which may be moderately used without sin. God did not intend that a religious life should be a morose and unhappy life, nor that it should debar us from a moderate use of pleasure, provided that we do not make it the end of our existence. We cannot look upon the world and see how beautiful God has made it, we cannot remember that He has given us an eye to see sights of beauty, and an ear to appreciate sounds of entrancing sweetness, and believe that such should be His will. It would not be possible that God, in whom all happiness resides, could wish His creatures to be unhappy, and therefore He has provided that we should have in various ways the means of enjoying ourselves without transgressing His laws. For this He has given us the powers of mind and sense, the gift of intellect, homes and friends, the bright sunshine, &c. &c.; but with all this we must acknowledge again how unsatisfying

are even the lawful pleasures of this life. They are full of danger in that they have the power to draw us away from God. They are short-lived, liable to be interrupted by pain and sickness and sorrow; our present bodily powers do not allow us to indulge in them save in a limited degree; they soon pall upon us.

3. The pleasure of serving God. This is the greatest happiness of which man is capable on earth. There is nothing which is able to give us such solid satisfaction as the sense of having done God's will. Let any one recall his own feelings at any time when he has lain down to rest with the consciousness that he has done well and thoroughly the duties which God gave him to fulfil, and that he has been trying his very best to please God throughout the day, and this will teach him in some degree the supreme happiness of serving God. What else can compare with it? Not the pleasures of sin, for they are vain and deceitful, and always leave a fatal sting behind them: not even allowable worldly pleasures, for they are transitory and palling at the best. And yet even this happiness is on earth imperfect. We cannot serve God as we would; still less can we serve Him now as He would be served; when we have done all that is in our power, we have still to acknowledge the unprofitableness of our service. And the more we

learn the great truth that our true happiness is to be found in doing the will of God, the more do we sigh for that time when all imperfections being done away our daily prayer shall receive its fulfilment, and God's will shall be done by us, even as it is now done by the Blessed Angels in Heaven. O my soul, do thou resolve to prepare thyself for that happy time by serving God as perfectly now as thou art able to do.

II. *The Happiness of the Blessed.*

Our last meditation has taught us something of the imperfection of all human joys. Let us now seek to comprehend the perfection of the happiness of the Blessed in Heaven: and yet every effort to do this must fall far short of the mark: for "*eye hath not seen, neither ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.*"

The Judgment is over: and whilst the troops of the lost are hurried to their doom, those whose robes have been washed white in the Blood of the Lamb prepare to ascend with Him and the hosts of the Blessed Angels, to take possession of those mansions which His love has prepared for them. The great

procession is formed, and as it wends its way upwards towards the gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the hymn of triumph which bursts from the lips of the redeemed in perfect harmony of will and sound is as the voice of many waters. The gates of pearl are reached, the streets of gold are entered, and there in that glorious city each weary wandering pilgrim finds his long sought home. Yes, of all the earthly figures by which we seek to gain some idea of the Happiness of the Blessed, none speaks more to our heart than that word Home.

Heaven is our Home. As the weary traveller rejoices to find himself once more in the presence of those whom he loves, and who have been so much in his heart during all those years of absence, so is it with the traveller who reaches the eternal goal.

We know what our earthly home is. We know something of the mutual love which hallows it, of the pleasing associations always connected with it, of the loving intercourse between father and child, husband and wife, brother and sister. But what is the happiest earthly home compared to heaven? How often is there discord and disagreement, and misunderstanding between the members of the most united earthly family, destroying its harmony and ruining its happiness. How often too is the family bond broken now by, it may be, life-long separations,

by sorrow, sickness, and death! But in Heaven there is neither discord nor separation. There we meet to part no more. There in Christ we are all one. There we are re-united to those whom we once loved on earth, and whom we shall find to be in all beauty and grace, more than our wildest fancy pictures to us. There, besides father and mother, wife and child, friend and neighbour, who are met to part no more, is God Himself, our own Heavenly Father who has gathered His own dear family around Him at last, that in loving intercourse with Him they may find their best and truest happiness.

Again, in Heaven there is rest and peace.

"There remaineth a rest for the people of God."

Let the hard worked son of toil say what rest is to him after the labour of the day; let the sailor describe his sense of security when after days and nights of tossing about on the deep in hourly danger of shipwreck he reaches his sought for harbour; let the soldier say what it is to be at peace, after all the dangers and toils and hardships of a long campaign: and yet no words of theirs can give an idea of that holy peace, that perfect rest, which is the portion of the Blessed in Heaven.

A peace, truly, such as the world cannot give—a rest such as we can have no idea of in this world of conflict. At times, indeed, there come to us as from

another world, sweet messages of divine consolation, which break in upon the dark clouds which surround us, and give us a faint foretaste of that Heavenly Peace which shall be ours when those clouds shall be gone for ever. Such is the sinner's sense of pardon, of restoration to his Heavenly Father's favour. Such a gleam of heavenly sunshine falls upon our souls (too sadly transient, alas) at the time of Confirmation and First Communion. Such, too, are those rare moments in a man's lifetime when the soul allows itself to be overpowered by the sense of God's personal love, and surrendering itself to that love, feels that God is all in all to it, that in God alone is true satisfaction to be found. The joy of pardon! how great it is even on earth. What must it be in Heaven, where it is complete and final? where no passing cloud can evermore come between us and the bright sunshine of God's love and favour! It is something to know that in Heaven there is no pain or sorrow; but it is far more to know that there is no sin or temptation. When once we stand upon that shore we are safe. Never more can we be tempted to stray from those pastures; never more can we be separated from His loving embrace. We are His! His for ever. Oh the joy of that thought even now! What must it be when we come to realise it?

But the chief Happiness of the Blessed is in the

presence and knowledge of God. It is a reward worth striving after to know that we shall be reunited to the loved ones from whom we parted in such sorrow on earth. We love to think, too, of the familiar intercourse we shall have with the saints of old, whose examples so cheer and encourage us in our earthly pilgrimage. It is something also to think that we shall be the companions of those pure spirits who by God's appointment succour and defend us on earth. But what is all this in comparison with the thought that we shall see Him face to face, *"whom having not seen we love, and in whom though now we see Him not we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory?"*

To see and know Him who is the Source and Fountain Head of all joy and beauty and glory and happiness! To gaze on the Infinite! To contemplate the adorable attributes of the Three in One! To bathe in the rivers of splendour that radiate from His Throne! This is Happiness indeed.

"Father of Jesus, love's Reward,
What rapture will it be,
Prostrate before Thy Throne to lie
And gaze and gaze on Thee."

From these familiar thoughts let us draw these two considerations :

1. If Heaven is our only true Home, let us seek to live as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, as those who are seeking a better country. What can it avail us to spend the time of our sojourning here as if we had nothing to look for hereafter? We may gain all that we seek for here: worldly success may be ours, the highest flight of our ambition may be reached, unlimited wealth may pour into our coffers, our earthly home may be all that we could wish, we may live respected, and leave an honoured name behind us when we die, and yet what avails it all if we have so lived for this world, that there is no place found for us in the Kingdom of our Redeemer? "*Set your affection therefore on things above, and not on things on the earth,*" for "*the fashion of this world passeth away and the lust thereof.*"

2. If the chief happiness of Heaven consists in the Presence and Knowledge of God, may we not learn that our truest happiness here on earth is to be found in seeking after our measure, to know Him more perfectly who is to be our exceeding great Reward hereafter? "*This is eternal life to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*" O my soul, if it be true that thou dost long with a holy longing for that time when in thine eternal home thou shalt bask in the sunshine of the Divine Presence, why dost thou not seek more eagerly

now the veiled Presence which is vouchsafed to thee? why dost thou not find more pleasure in prayer, in holy meditation? why art thou not more devout in thy adoration when thou art in the Presence of Him who reveals Himself so clearly to thee in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar? Wilt thou not resolve for the future to make more truly thine own the holy aspiration of the Psalmist of old, "*My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God, when shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?*"

III. *The Inner Life.*

The great aim and object of our present life is so to live that, by the blessing of God, Heaven may be our Eternal Home. And yet, even with this blessed end in view, it is hard sometimes not to despair when we remember how difficult is the way, how great and powerful are the enemies with whom we have to contend: "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*" Have we not felt in our own persons the dreadful power of these enemies against whom we have sworn to contend to the end, the devil, the world, and the flesh?

It is well then (is it not?) to spend a few moments in meditation on the powers which God has conferred on our soul to enable us to fight successfully as good soldiers and servants of the Cross. How many a person has in this world lost his opportunities of distinction, or wealth, or success in his profession, because he either distrusted or was ignorant of his own powers and talents? And may it not be the same with the soul? How can we, knowing what we have at stake, dare to go through life ignorant of ourselves, never using the great powers with which God has gifted us, simply because we have never taken the trouble to find out what they are? Oh, how great must be the despair of that soul that discovers, for the first time after death, what great things he was capable of! how he might have overcome his hindrances, and conquered his enemies, powerful as they were, by virtue of the powers bestowed on him by God, instead of lying a helpless and willing captive in the hands of the great enemy of souls!

Let this, then, be the question for our present meditation: What am I? What am I, not merely as a man, woman, or child, but as a baptized Christian?

And the answer is at once given, in the words in which our Lord explains to Nicodemus the mystery

of Holy Baptism. “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*” From these words we learn that we have a two-fold nature :—first of all, the nature inherited from our parents, a poor, weak, sinful, sin-attracted human nature : and secondly, the Spiritual nature, which is the gift and offspring of the Holy Spirit in the laver of Regeneration. Between these two natures there is a continual struggle going on, on the result of which depends our eternal life. “*For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh ye shall live.*” How often have we experienced ourselves this antagonism of the flesh and the Spirit ? We have felt as if we were made up, so to speak, of two separate selves, with different hopes, wishes, and interests, according as the one nature or the other was in the ascendant. We have been for a while under the complete dominion of the flesh, been carried away by some headlong rush of passion ; and then, when it is all over, when the voice of the better nature is once more making itself heard, we are astonished beyond measure to think of the absolute folly of our conduct. How was it possible, we ask, that with the clear knowledge and high aspirations that we feel to be ours, now that the spirit has the mastery, we could have acted with such folly ?

Here, then, is the answer to our question—What are we? what is our nature? what are our powers as baptized Christians? That we have within us a two-fold nature, the natural and the supernatural, the fleshly and the spiritual; and these two natures are not only distinctly antagonistic to each other, but there is a constant struggle going on between them, until one or the other is subdued.

Two considerations follow from this thought:—

1. There can be no impossibilities for the Christian. There are difficulties, there are temptations, there are trials, but there can be no impossibilities. Temptations can be met, difficulties overcome, trials borne by virtue of that power which is in us as the children of God. Is it not one secret of our repeated failures to conquer the flesh, that we do not sufficiently realise, and therefore fail to use, the power that is within us as the children of God? We are apt to depend too much on our own exertions, or to look for some external aid; whereas if we could only grasp the fact that we are Christ's, that we have His Holy Spirit abiding in us, we should go forth to meet our foes with a secret consciousness of strength that would of itself be irresistible. For what is it that this new birth of ours in Baptism implies—this new spiritual life superadded to our natural life? It is nothing less than the Indwelling of Christ. How

fully does the great Apostle recognize this! How does he seem to delight to dwell on the fact that his own personality is lost, as it were, in the consciousness of Christ's abiding Presence within him, "*I live,*" he says, "*and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;*" and again, "*As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ;*" and it is in the consciousness of this strength that he feels that he can know no impossibilities. "*I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.*"

2. How important is it to use diligently all means of grace which may support, strengthen, and encourage this inner life of the soul! As the powers of the body waste away with the daily wear and tear of our life in the world and require constant recruiting, so are the powers of the soul wasted by daily contact with the sins and temptations of the world, and must perish altogether if we fail to recruit them; and this can only be done by the soul's communion with God. Hence the great importance of prayer and meditation and Holy Communion. It is by this intimate communion with God, by this daily feeding on the Bread of Life, the living Christ, that the soul is even in this life transformed into the same image which it daily contemplates, "*from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,*" and is prepared for that time when the transformation shall be completed in the

visible Presence of its dearest Lord; for then "*we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*"

"Let the attainment of this Divine Life be the continual prayer and breathing of thy soul, the longing ever rising up before the altar, the desire that is ever present before God, the resolve by which thou art known in the kingdom of His grace. The only true life is the life which begins and ends in God. . . .

'O Lord our God, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us, but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name.' *'Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me with glory; for whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'*" *

* Carter's Sermons.

HELL.

I. *Earthly Sufferings.*

It will perhaps help us to realise more vividly the horrors of the lost in hell if we spend a few moments in meditation on the nature and uses of earthly sufferings.

Suffering is the law of our present nature. The infant newly born into the world, and the man who, encompassed with age and infirmities, is sinking to the grave, alike bear witness to this truth. There is no escape from this law. It is inevitable that we should suffer in mind or in body, or in both. That the cross of suffering seems to press less hardly on some than on others, that some are for long years comparatively free from it, is true; but sooner or later it will come, and the question is, How are we to bear it when it comes?

But perhaps the first question which the rebellious soul puts to itself is this, Why does God permit suffering? If He is all powerful and all merciful, why did He make His creatures subject to pain? Why did He not place me at once in a position where

I should be free from temptation, sin, and suffering? But is the clay to say to the potter Why hast thou formed me thus? Is the creature to lay down its laws for the Creator? It is enough for us to know that it is the will, inscrutable if you like, but still the will, of God to make us bow our necks in submission.

And yet we may go further and assert boldly in vindication of the mercy of God, that He did not create us for suffering. Suffering is the law of our nature not as it was created by God, but as it was perverted by us. It is the law not of our healthy nature but of a diseased and perverted nature, that has departed from the original condition of its being. There was no pain or suffering in Eden. Does not this thought remove still further from us all ground of complaint? If the child is told that fire burns, and then in wilful disobedience thrusts his hand into it, can he justly complain of the pain it causes him? If death and its antecedents, sorrow and pain, were the proclaimed consequences of sin, can man complain when by his own actions he has brought those consequences upon himself? Whatever therefore it be the will of God that we should suffer in obedience to this law of our fallen nature, let us bear it with patience and resignation, acknowledging the justice of His sentence.

We have been thinking of suffering as the punishment and natural consequence of our sins. Let us look upon it now in another light—as a blessing.

There is a story told in ancient mythology of a man who had the power of turning all he touched into gold. That which the ancients thus vainly dreamed of in their wild fancies is more than realized by the Christian. If the touch of Christ turns not the dust of the earth into material wealth, it does far more, since it converts a curse into a blessing. That which was a grievous burden and heavy to be borne, is joyfully accepted and cheerfully borne after the touch of His hands. It is so with earthly suffering.

In the light of the Gospel we learn to accept suffering:—

1. As a mark of our Sonship.

“If ye be without chastisement . . . then are ye bastards and not sons.” As a father sees that it is for his children’s good sometimes to chastise them, even so it is with us. And though the chastisements at times appear to be grievous, yet we shall only be too thankful for them when they have wrought in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Even the eternally begotten Son of God was not in His humanity exempt from this law, but was made perfect through suffering. Is it for us then to raise a complaint when with so many sins to be forsaken, so many imperfec-

tions to be cured, we are made subject to similar trials?

2. As a merciful warning against the danger of sin.

If all went well with us,—if sin had no pains and penalties attached to it,—how great fear would there be lest we should lose sight altogether of its future doom, and living entirely for the present, be willingly forgetful of the awful future.

Have we not then great cause to be thankful that we are frequently through suffering brought to a sense of the vanity of all earthly things, and made to seek after those treasures in Heaven which fade not away? How many of us owe our own conversion or first conviction of sin to some merciful affliction, not easy to be borne perhaps at the time! Or, again, how often as we have stood by the sick bed of those whose earlier lives have been spent in sin and carelessness, have we had occasion to bless God for the means which He has taken to bring the sufferer to the knowledge of Himself—as we watched the hard lines which have been traced by sin and worldliness gradually yielding to higher and holier influences—until at last the once hardened sinner is hardly to be recognised in the meek and patient sufferer who is waiting for his consolation.

Verily there is deep truth in the old and simple

D

saying of the Psalmist, "*Before I was troubled I went wrong, but now have I kept Thy word.*"

3. As a means of regaining our lost likeness to our Creator.

For in our sufferings we are made partakers of Christ's sufferings. The greater therefore they are the more closely are we brought into outward conformity with the Man of Sorrows; and if we take Him for our example, and bear our trials with the same meekness and son-like submission which was shewn by Him, the likeness will not be external only, but through suffering Christ will be formed in us.

This thought that we are in our sorrows and trials the partakers of Christ's sufferings is the true source of all joy in suffering, of the joy which was shewn so pre-eminently by the holy Apostles and martyrs of old, and which even now sometimes astonishes the world in the person of some poor, weak, suffering child or woman, who out of weakness has been made strong, having learnt for the love of Christ to glory in tribulation also.

The question is then answered, How are we to bear earthly sufferings?

There are three stages:—

1. With submission as a just punishment due to our sins.

2. With patience, believing that it is for our present and lasting good.

3. With joy, as being made partakers of Christ's sufferings.

II. *The Pains of the Lost.*

Let us try to realize, as far as it is possible, for our soul's good, the sufferings of the lost in Hell.

The Judgment is over. The sentence has been pronounced. The final division has taken place, and as the armies of the redeemed ascend to take possession of the mansions which have been prepared for them, and to sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb, the hosts of the lost are hurried to their eternal doom. "*These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.*"

They have looked for the last time on the face of Him who would have been their Redeemer if they would have let Him. They have heard from His lips the awful sentence, "*Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*" Already the sweet sounds of the song of triumph and of the harpers harping on their golden harps are being lost in the far distance, or are drowned in

shrieks of unavailing despair, and in the fiercely exulting yells of devils. As the pearly gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem are thrown open to admit the returning King and His rejoicing hosts, and are then closed for ever, they catch one far off glimpse of the happiness which might have been theirs but for their wilful folly. Henceforth no sounds of entrancing sweetness ever reach their ears—no sights of beauty ever gladden their eyes—but with wailings which tell of mingled feelings of hatred, remorse, and despair, they sink down into the bottomless pit, the home of the devil and his angels, there to be tortured by the worm which dieth not, and the fire which cannot be quenched.

The torments of the lost may be classed as Bodily and Mental.

1. It is a mistake to speak of the sufferings of hell as being merely mental; impossible in fact to read the descriptions which we have of these torments in our Bibles without seeing that they refer literally to bodily pains. Men shall rise again with their own bodies to give account of their own works, and it is with these bodies that they go to their eternal homes to share in the soul's redemption or the soul's damnation. Actual pain, then, is part of the torment of hell. The flame of that lake of fire and brimstone scorches the body no less than it withers the soul;

and oh ! if pain in this world is hard to bear, if we think much of a pinched finger or a scalded foot, what must be the sufferings of hell, to which every sense contributes its share—where the ear is shocked by hateful sounds in which the tongue is compelled to join—where the eye is ever pained by sights which it cannot refuse to look upon. If you think what man is capable of suffering now—if you picture to yourself the most horrible and painful diseases, where every limb is racked with pain, every nerve contributes its share to the sufferings of the poor body, you will not have realized how great are the bodily pains of the lost. For in all earthly suffering there is some alleviation. Pain is not incessant. The body has not the power to endure more than a certain amount of torture. Moments of relief come, in soothing sleep or times of comparative freedom from pain ; and at the worst there is always the power of looking forward to the time when death shall set at rest the poor wearied, worn-out frame. How often are we compelled to be thankful for the death of those who are dearest to us, in spite of our own loss, because we feel that their death is a real release to them from sufferings which it pained us as much to witness as it did them to bear.

But in hell there is no relief, no prospect of any intermission of pain, no hope that death or insensi-

bility will come to set the racked frame at rest. "All hope abandon ye who enter here," is the inscription said by the poet of old to be written over the portals of Hell.

2. But the torments of the soul far exceed in their awfulness these pains of the body. Let us try to reckon them up:—

1. *There is fear*—fear of what is to come, fear of their companions, fear of the devils who have them in their power, and whose very existence it is to torture them for ever.

2. *There is despair*—despair which in this world drives men to the last awful sin of self-destruction, and which in that dreadful world drives the lost soul further and further into the deepest abysses of sin and blasphemy.

3. *There is the undying worm of conscience*, filling their minds with self-reproach, making them hate themselves for their folly in rejecting the Great Salvation which was offered them, and choosing such a hideous doom. "I might have been saved, but I would not," is the incessant wail that ascends in the smoke of their torment.

4. *There is hatred*—a hatred of God, whose justice has found them out, of the devils who torment them, of the companions who surround them, of those who led them into sin and failed to warn them of its awful

consequences, an envious hatred of the just who have entered into their rest.

5. *There is the absence of God*, the most to be dreaded of the punishments of hell. Hell is the one place from which the Omnipresent God excludes His presence. It is this which makes the unutterable darkness of hell, which makes its hopelessness more hopeless still. To be without God, out of the sight of God, outside the influence of His mercy, to be unable to send up one single appealing cry which shall enter into His ears; with not a single ray of His light to brighten the darkness; this is awful indeed. And yet such is the law of eternity. "*To him that hath, to him shall be given; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath.*" The worst men in the world have some redeeming points in their character; some traces—faint indeed, but still traces—of the image in which they were created and made; something to make us hope that the mercy of God may yet reach them; but in hell all this is lost for ever. The wicked there are irretrievably wicked. All that is evil in them is evil for ever, all that was good is lost for ever. "*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.*"

7. *Eternity*.—All this is eternal. Day after day passes by and they are no nearer the end. Year after year passes over their heads, thousands of years

pass by and there is still no prospect of relief. It is impossible for us to realize eternity now ; it is one of those infinite subjects which is beyond our grasp. But think how the sense of their punishment being eternal must increase every pang and pain of the lost.

O, my soul, dost thou not tremble to think that such may be the fearful doom thou art even now preparing for thyself? Is there not reason to fear that thou mayest be placing too blind and presumptuous a trust in the love of thy Lord? True, His mercies are infinite, His love past finding out; but what if thou shouldest be making no return, if thou shouldest be making it an excuse for thy continued estrangement from Him, how will it avail thee then? Rouse thyself, then, to a sense of thy danger by dwelling in thought on these terrors of the Lord. Pray that thou mayest have grace given thee to make a good use of the time that is left thee, and resolve that thou wilt never wilfully commit the smallest sin, lest it should seal thy doom.

III. *What leads to Hell.—What saves from Hell.*

1. “*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.*”

There are, then, two classes whose souls fill up the ranks of the lost—the wicked and they that forget God; those who sin with a high hand, braving in their madness the displeasure of their Creator, and they who are simply indifferent and careless—who allow their occupations, or their pleasures, or their cares so to distract their attention and fill up their time that God is not in all their thoughts.

“*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these : adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*”

But think not that because none of these things can fairly be laid to thy charge, that thou art therefore necessarily safe. Thou mayest be neither a drunkard, nor a fornicator, nor a swearer, nor in any way an evil liver ; thou mayest be living outwardly

the most respectable life, honest, upright, scrupulously just in thy dealings, gaining in all things a good report of thy neighbours, and yet thou mayest be numbered amongst those that forget God. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus we do not read that the rich man who "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments," was guilty of any great sin. He apparently lived and died respected. His condemnation was due to neglect of duty, to a forgetfulness of God in daily life. And so again in the account of the judgment given in the 25th chapter of S. Matthew, those who are sent away into everlasting punishment are not so much as accused of any heinous breach of God's commandments, but are condemned for their neglect of duty through lack of love. "*Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto Me.*" If thou wouldest be safe, therefore, examine thyself, not only as to what thou hast done, but as to what thou hast left undone. Art thou fulfilling the purpose of thy being? Art thou living to the glory of God?

But if such be the degree of holiness required, may it not be asked in despair, Who, then, can be saved? since we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. "*With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*"

2. *What, then, saves from hell?*

First and foremost it is *the love of God*, who wills not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. His love has found the way and marked it out for you, by which you may come to Him and receive at His hands the freest fullest forgiveness for all past sins and forgetfulnesses. His love has spared you to this hour to give you time for repentance. His love is calling you now, by all the warnings of this Holy Season, to turn to Him with all your heart.

But remember that you have your own part to do. His love will not save you in spite of yourself. You must listen to His call, and come to Him in penitence and awakened love.

“ O then come to the merciful Saviour who calls you,
 O come to the Lord who forgives and forgets,
 Though death be the lot that on earth may befall you,
 There's a bright home above, where the sun never sets.

Have you sinned as none else in the world sinned before you,
 Are you blacker than all other creatures in guilt,
 O fear not and doubt not ! the mother that bore you
 Loves you less than the Saviour whose Blood you have spilt.”

O merciful Jesus, give us all grace so to come to Thee now that we may find a shelter in Thy loving embrace from all the storms of this life, and from the fierceness of Thy Father's wrath in the life to come ;

that, being saved from the hell which we fear, we may find everlasting rest and peace and fulness of joy in Thy presence.

“Behold I come quickly.”

“Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

THE END.

G. NORMAN AND SON, PRINTERS, MAIDEN LANE, COVENT GARDEN.

